United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT OFFICE
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, Oregon 97504
email address: or110mb@or.blm.gov

TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

IN REPLY REFER TO:
1792(OR115)

APR 4 2005

Dear Sir or Madam:

Attached are the Environmental Assessment (EA), Decision Record, and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Alco Spring Development Project, EA #OR-115-05-07. This EA evaluates the Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), proposal to construct a protection fence around an existing spring source and pipe the water to a trough in an off-site location. The project is located in the Southwest ¼ of the Southwest ¼ of Section 30 in Township 32 South, Range 1 East, Willamette Meridian.

These documents are available for public review and comment for a period of 15 days. The effective date for this decision will be the date of publication of the Notice of Decision and FONSI in the *Medford Mail Tribune*. Notice will also appear in the *Upper Rogue Independent*. However, the date of publication in the *Medford Mail Tribune* will prevail as the effective date for this decision.

Administrative remedies are available to persons who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. According to 43 Code of Federal Regulations § 5003 – Administrative Remedies – protests may be made within 15 days of the publication of a notice of decision in a newspaper of general circulation, in this case, the *Medford Mail Tribune*. Protests must be filed with the BLM authorized officer and must contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision. Protests received after the 15-day period will not be considered.

Comments will be received by mailing to:

Bob Budesa
Bureau of Land Management
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, OR 97504

You may also call Mr. Budesa, our Range Management Specialist, at 541-618-2287 or E-mail him at ormd110@or.blm.gov. Be sure to include "Attention: Bob Budesa" on the subject line or somewhere in your message.

Any comments received, including names and addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the Medford District Office; 3040 Biddle Road; Medford, Oregon during regular business hours (8:00 am to 4:30 pm), Monday through Friday. If you wish to withhold your name and address or both from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of

Information Act, you must state this at the beginning of your written comment. Your request will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Sincerely,

JIM KEETON

Jim Keeton
Acting Field Manager
Butte Falls Resource Area

1 Attachment - Environmental Assessment (EA), Decision Record, and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Alco Spring Development Project (11pp)

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
for
Alco Spring Development

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT
BUTTE FALLS RESOURCE AREA

March 2005

For further information please contact:
Butte Falls Range Conservationist
BLM Medford District Office
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, Oregon 97504

(541) 618-2287

DECISION RECORD / FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
for
ALCO SPRING DEVELOPMENT

Interdisciplinary Team members of the Butte Falls Resource Area, Medford District, Bureau of Land Management have analyzed the development of a spring, to protect the biological diversity within the Timbered Rock Fire area.

The proposed action and alternatives are described in the attached EA.

The existing spring is located in the southwest ¼ of the southwest ¼ in Section 30 of Township 32 South, Range 1 East, Willamette Meridian. The public notice of the availability of this FONSI is provided through the BLM Medford District's central registration and recording system.

There are no floodplains, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, known hazardous waste areas, areas of religious concern, prime nor unique farmlands within the construction areas. The construction area does not qualify for potential wilderness designation. No adverse impacts are anticipated to the fisheries, lands, or minerals resources. No threatened or endangered plants or animals, cultural, or paleontological resources were observed in the areas. Should threatened or endangered plants or cultural or paleontological resources be discovered, they would be protected.

I have reviewed this environmental assessment and have determined that the proposed action and the alternative described will not have any significant impacts on the human environment. An EIS is not required. I have also determined that the proposed projects are in conformance with approved land use plans.

Decision Record & Rationale

The decision is to implement the proposed action of developing the spring to protect the biological diversity of the area.

Jim Keeton
Butte Falls Area Manager

Date 3/29/05

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BUTTE FALLS RESOURCE AREA

EA COVER SHEET

RESOURCE AREA: Butte Falls; EA Number OR-115-05-07

ACTION/TITLE: ALCO SPRING DEVELOPMENT

LOCATION: SW¼ SW¼ SECTION 30, T. 32 S., R. 1 E., WILLAMETTE MERIDIAN

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Bob Budesa
BLM District Office
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, Oregon 97504

Preparer/Lead: Bob Budesa

I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR PROPOSAL

Livestock are authorized to use the Flat Creek allotment. For watering purposes, livestock have access to streams within this allotment. The streams within this allotment provide habitat to various species of fish and other wildlife species, and as such, require a certain level of protection. Alternate water sources for livestock, away from streams and creeks, will reduce potential for livestock/fish interactions.

A. NEED FOR THE PROPOSAL

BLM owns and administers 12,141(48%) of the 25,114 total acres in the Flat Creek allotment. The other major landowner is Forest Capital Partners, owning 11,715 acres (purchased from Boise Cascade in 2005). The boundary of the Flat Creek allotment coincides very closely with the configuration of the Timbered Rock Fire of 2002. In essence, the entire allotment was burned to varying degrees.

Prior to the fire, a fairly thick stand of mixed oak and pine covered the more gently sloping

lower elevations of the allotment. In the higher, steeper elevations, heavy stands of pine and fir were more prevalent. Grass, forbs, and shrubs grew in the interspaces, along roads, and in the clearings created from previous timber harvest.

The Timbered Rock fire burned in an inconsistent manner across this allotment. Although an EIS was prepared, which is heretofore referenced for further landscape description, it is essential to state that fire intensity varied greatly. Some stands of trees were left unaffected, while others were totally killed. Many acres simply had the understory (grasses, shrubs, and small trees) removed. Immediately following the fire, Boise Cascade began salvaging trees from their lands. At the same time, BLM began preparation of the Timbered Rock Fire Salvage and Elk Creek Watershed Restoration Draft EIS.

The livestock operator is authorized to graze cattle in the Flat Creek allotment. 72 cattle are turned out on April 1st, and graze the southern portion of the allotment until June 15th. On June 16th, 36 cattle are moved north to Forest Service permits, and the remaining 36 stay on the BLM allotment until October 15th. Boise Cascade has leased their intermingled lands to the same operator, at the same stocking rate. Cattle turned out for the same time periods as described above (52 head from April 1st until June 15th, and 26 head from June 16th until October 15th).

Although 2005 will be the first year cattle will use the allotment since the Timbered Rock fire, it is anticipated that they will disperse across the allotment in search of now abundant grass. Streams and creeks will be the primary source for water. Since some of the streams provide habitat to coho salmon, there may be times when resources would be better protected if livestock could get their water elsewhere. In an attempt to entice cattle into areas previously ungrazed, this spring development is proposed.

Although many springs exist in the allotment, they were probably hidden by brush and other vegetation prior to the fire. The fire has now made these water sources more available to all critters needing water. By protecting this water source, and piping water to an off-site location, long-term water is ensured, and pressure is decreased along streams, creeks, and riparian areas.

It is imperative that spring sources be protected to ensure their longevity, and that water be provided outside the exclosures. If springs are fenced without providing water outside the fence, elk and cattle will pressure, and eventually destroy the fence surrounding the springs in an attempt to get to the water.

The proposed spring development and associated exclosure is located in the southwest ¼ of the southwest ¼ in Section 30 of Township 32 South, Range 1 East, Willamette Meridian. The spring is located with 75 feet of an existing road, so no new road construction for project implementation is anticipated.

B. TIERING AND CONFORMANCE

This environmental assessment (EA) is tiered to and in conformance with the Final Medford District Grazing Management Program Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), dated April 1984, and to the Timbered Rock Fire Salvage and Elk Creek Watershed Restoration Draft EIS, dated 2003. Although a separate grazing environmental statement was developed to consider the impacts of livestock grazing, these actions conform to the broader guidance contained within the Medford District Resource Management Plan, signed in 1994.

All documents mentioned above are available for review in the Medford District Office.

II. ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

ALTERNATIVE A: (Proposed Action)

The proposed action is to construct a protection fence around an existing spring, and pipe water away from the spring source to a water trough. The construction phase, to be implemented in the summer of 2005, will involve digging a hole in the spring large enough to accommodate a head box (3'-4' piece of perforated culvert), placing rock around the head box to act as a filter for large debris, construct a protection fence immediately surrounding the spring, and piping the water via buried black plastic pipe to a trough located outside the exclosure. The trough will be located north of the spring, on a small, relatively level bench. Some further leveling may be necessary in order for the trough to be properly installed. A float valve will be placed in the trough so that once the trough is full, any excess water will be backed up through the pipe, and recharge the spring itself, instead of running out the trough and away from the spring.

The developed spring will provide water for livestock and wildlife other than what they find in creeks. The protection fence is expected to be no more than 100' x 100', and will eliminate livestock and elk from gaining access to the spring source. Small creatures will still have access to the spring. Existing trees, protected by 2x4's, will provide a strong, sturdy fence, and eliminate the need to install typical fence corners (and the associated soil disturbance that accompanies it). By providing water in the upper elevations of the allotment, grazing use should decline along Elk Creek, and other streams and creeks should receive lower pressure and use from livestock as well.

ALTERNATIVE B: (No Action)

The no action alternative would result in livestock continuing to use the existing water sources and associated vegetation the way they've used it in the past. This severely limits the flexibility of the grazing system.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

This section illustrates the specific environment surrounding the spring that could be potentially impacted by each of the alternatives. For information about the general condition of the allotment following the fire, refer to the Timbered Rock Fire Salvage and Elk Creek Watershed Restoration Draft EIS, dated 2003.

A. Soils/Watershed

The spring is located on a gently-sloping hillside, with a somewhat well-defined channel resulting from the runoff of water from the source. Some of the water flows to a small meadow system, while the remainder goes beneath the surface. The location of the springs is shown on the attached map.

B. Archaeology/Cultural Resource

No known archaeological or cultural sites are known to exist within the immediate proximity to the proposed project sites.

C. Wildlife

Elk and possibly deer use the springs for water. The spring is located above a pond owned by Forest Capital Partners (formerly Boise). A dam on the pond levee effectively blocks all fish migration upstream from the lower section of Alco Creek, but there may be a few fish in the pond that could migrate upstream from the pond.

No known threatened, endangered, or special status animal species are known to exist in this area. The area was surveyed for T&E and special status animals, and none were found.

D. Plants

No known threatened, endangered, or special status plant species are known to exist in this area. The area was surveyed for T&E and special status plants, and none were found. The project area is outside the range of the three T&E plants that occur in the Butte Falls Resource Area.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This section discusses the environmental impacts (beneficial or adverse) which could result from implementation of the proposed action or alternatives. Where site specific environmental impacts were considered to be minimal or non-existent, or the cumulative impacts described in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Supplemental EIS were considered adequate,

further discussion was not considered necessary.

ALTERNATIVE A: (Proposed Action)

A. Soils/Watershed

Improved availability and increased amounts of water will benefit wildlife and livestock. The marshy area immediately surrounding the spring will be protected from further trampling by wildlife and livestock. By providing water for livestock and elk away from existing streams and creeks, impacts to aquatic species is expected to be decreased.

A very small amount of ground disturbance will occur around the trough, and the action will take place in the dry summer months. It is not expected that there will be any residual soil impacts. There will be no removal of trees.

A float valve will be installed in the trough. When the trough is full, excess water will flow back through the spring, ensuring its longevity, and preventing muddy areas around the trough.

B. Archaeology/Cultural Resource

No archaeological or cultural values were found on public land, therefore there will be no impact.

C. Wildlife

No motorized equipment will be required for installation of either the spring or the trough, so noise will not be an issue. No trees or shrubs will be removed, and disturbance to the surrounding area is expected to be minimal, so impacts to habitat will be slight. The proposed action would not substantially affect any other listed, candidate, or sensitive species.

Development of the spring will ensure long term water for all wildlife species. The proposed action is considered to have no adverse effects on wildlife species.

No fish are known to inhabit the waters flowing from the spring (above the pond).

D. Plants

No T&E or special status plants are present in the project area. There would be “no effect” to any T&E plants, and no trend toward listing of any special status plants.

ALTERNATIVE B (No Action)

Under the no action alternative, the springs would remain undeveloped, and the unregulated use of the springs would continue. Livestock would continue to use streams and creeks for the majority of their water supply.

A. Soils/Watershed

The soils around these springs would continue to be minimally impacted. The use by livestock and wildlife in other areas would increase, thereby increasing the potential for detrimental effects to the soils and associated watersheds.

B. Archaeology/Cultural Resource

No impacts

C. Wildlife

Livestock will continue to get water from existing creeks and ponds. Since livestock will be turned out high on the ridges, above all coho critical habitat, impacts to fish are expected to be minimal, even early in the year when redds are present.

D. Plants

The undeveloped spring could receive further damage from unrestricted wildlife and livestock use. Elk and possibly deer use the spring, they are expected to continue using the spring. The increased use of the undeveloped spring could result in more degradation of the surrounding soils and vegetation. Existing and future damage would limit the availability of water from this spring.

V. MITIGATING MEASURES

1. Escape ramps will be placed in the troughs to ensure small critters can extricate themselves.

2. Trees used as fence corners will be protected by 2x4's. Wire will be stapled to the 2x4's. A small gate will be installed, in order to remove any trapped critters.

3. A float valve will be installed in the trough, so that once the trough is full, any excess water will flow back into the spring, and not allowed to flow off-site.

4. The bottom wire of the fence will be at least 18" off the ground to ensure small critters have access to the spring.

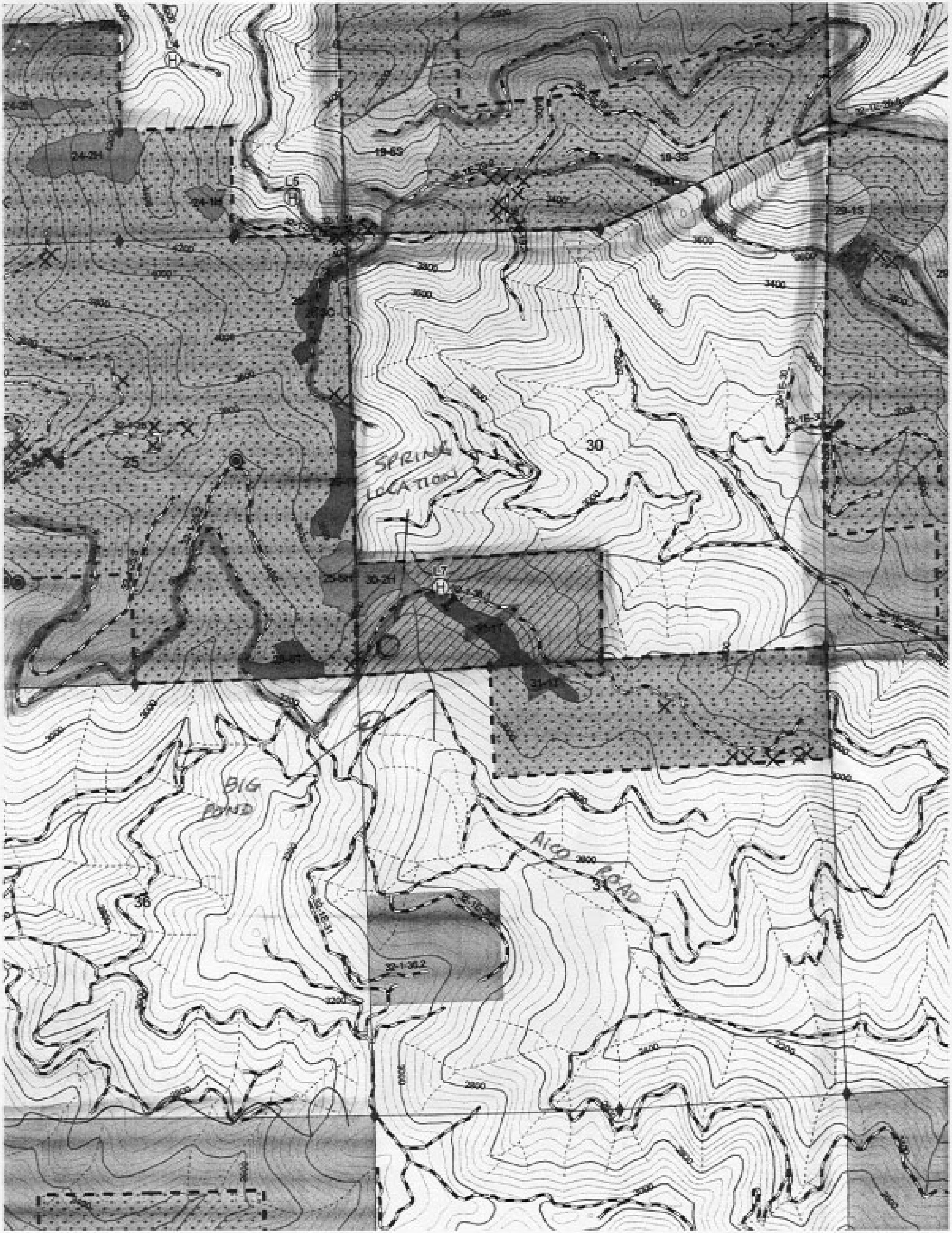
5. A "Y" or some other type of valve will be placed in the hose line immediately below the spring box, so that prior to the onset of winter, water can be stopped from flowing to the trough, and ensure no damage due to freezing weather. Shutting off the water could also aid in the movement of livestock, should they be required to be elsewhere.

6. Construction will take place during the dry summer months to reduce impacts to soils.

VI. PERSONS OR AGENCIES CONSULTED

Wildlife – Linda Hale
Fisheries – Gene Shull
Botany – Marcia Wineteer
Cultural – Diane Parry
Water Quality – Shawn Simpson
Soils – Ken Van Etten

Public notice of the availability of this Environmental Analysis is provided through the BLM Medford District's central registration and recording system.


SPRING LOCATION
BIG POND
AICO ROAD
30
25
36
24-2H
24-1H
19-6S
19-3S
30-2H
32-1-36.2
L6
L7

T.32S.,R.1E., WILL. MER.

SCALE: 1" =1 MILE

BURNT PEAK

REV. 8-9-04